

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bell, Canton, Cavanagh, and Galicki

MEMBERS ABSENT: Berger and Porter

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Solicitor Matheney

The Mayor called the Regular Council meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. Berger and Porter were absent. Cavanagh asked whether the changes to the zoning code needed to be included in the minutes, and the Fiscal Officer explained that they were not discussed in detail in the meeting so they would not be in detail in the minutes. The Solicitor added that it was a Public Hearing, no one came and there was no discussion. The Zoning Code changes were then approved at regular Council meeting following the hearing. **Cavanagh made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2024, Public Hearing, seconded by Bell. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried. Canton made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2023, Regular Council meeting, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

MAYOR’S REPORT: The Mayor referred to the Round 39 Public Works District 7 Preapplication form that was distributed to Council. The Engineer completed this preapplication for the Hemlock Rd. culvert. The Mayor noted that the price was down and said he had sent an email to the Russell Township Trustees saying it would be about \$600,000. When he went to their meeting, it was estimated at \$200,000. He thought they would be happy to see that according to the Engineer’s preapplication, it will only be \$92,400. The Mayor hoped the Village would get a Public Works grant. Russell Township would gladly provide a letter of support, but do not have the money floating around to help. The Engineer will have more information in June. Cavanagh clarified that it would be a shared project with half being South Russell and half Russell. The Mayor said they would know for sure when the Engineer worked through it but thought splitting it would be the fair way to do it since Russell Township shares the road with South Russell. The Mayor added that the pictures in the preapplication showed the state of the culverts, and he did not know how the residents put up with the flooding over the years. Cavanagh mentioned that the deadline to submit was May 24th, and the Mayor verified it was submitted on time.

The Mayor announced that Staff Sergeant (SSG) Maggie Carpenter, Ohio National Guard, will be the guest speaker at the Veterans breakfast which will be held on Monday, November 11th.

The Mayor addressed a proposed Eagle Scout project that was supposed to have been presented, but the Eagle Scout candidate had not provided the information.

FISCAL OFFICER: The Fiscal Officer referred to her report. She advised that it would be necessary to approve applying for the Hemlock Rd. culvert funding and to ratify the preapplication. She clarified that the application was submitted for \$92,400 with half coming from the State and half from the Village. It does not list Russell Township.

The Fiscal Officer also addressed the newsletter. It is no longer possible to send the newsletter with the bulk permit because the Village cannot agree to the online terms required by the United States Postal Service (USPS). Sending the newsletter via regular mail would cost close to \$1,000 in postage. She asked whether Council would want to do this or consider sending it electronically with notification through social media and perhaps a notice in the newspaper. Cavanagh supported the latter. The Mayor said that 14% of the residents are senior citizens and thought it would be better to do the remaining three newsletters for the year through the mail and let residents know of the change to the electronic version. Galicki said he would not support three more times. He thought if the concern was for the senior citizens, publishing the hard copy newsletter one more time would allow the Village to inform residents that this would be the last paper newsletter and provide directions on how to sign up for the email version. Cavanagh asked if there was really 14% of the residents who were not computer literate. The Mayor said 14% of the residents are seniors, and it was possibly an unfair assumption that they were all were not online. Two more newsletters would allow the Village to communicate about the Fall Festival and Shredding Day in the fall. The Christmas newsletter could be online.

There was discussion about the issue with the USPS, specifically the indemnification clause in the required online agreement. The Solicitor advised that the Village cannot indemnify anyone regardless of who it is. Political subdivisions cannot indemnify without appropriating the right amount of money and cannot speculate as to what the amount of money would be for any claim. The Village can hold them harmless, which was suggested to USPS. They said they would agree to any reasonable change but had not gotten back to the Solicitor.

Canton believed their constituents would tell them loud and clear which way they should go but understood the point of going online. Bell asked about the budget for the remaining newsletters, and Galicki advised that the increased amount had not been budgeted. The Fiscal Officer explained that money had been put into the bulk permit account and was just sitting at the post office because the Village did not know the rules would be changing. A refund is possible, but there are printing costs and postage costs. It may be possible to do two more. The Mayor said one would come out in June, but the next one would be more important with the Fall Festival, Shredding Day, and the Veterans Breakfast. He suggested two more hard copy newsletters. Canton asked if the information in the fall newsletter could be placed in the summer edition. The Fiscal Officer said this would be possible if Council decided on a date for the Fall Festival. She proposed that the Village communicate that this will be the last hard copy version and if there is still money in the budget, perhaps do one more. Bell suggested including an article explaining the reason for the change.

The Chief advised that an eblast was sent regarding the upcoming senior presentation, and the police received a good number of registrations from this.

There was further discussion about sending the next newsletter by mail and if money remained sending one more after, but the Fiscal Officer needed to know whether they should state this would be the last one. Cavanagh said she was good with doing two more and that would be it. She inquired about the eblasts, and the Fiscal Officer explained the plan to post a QR code for the eblast sign-up through multiple sources. Bell asked if it could also be texted to residents, and the Chief said he had the system to do this. Canton asked how many residents are signed up for eblasts. The Fiscal Officer would look into this.

Regarding the Street Commissioner's announcement that he would be retiring, the Fiscal Officer asked permission to advertise the position. Canton asked what the retirement date was, and Bell replied it was September 30th. **Bell made a motion that the Fiscal Officer be permitted to place an ad for the soon to be open Street Commissioner position, seconded by Galicki. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.** The Mayor stated that at the last Chagrin Valley meeting, he took business cards and passed them out to as many communities as possible saying that the Village is looking for somebody for the Street Commissioner position. He encouraged Council to start beating the bushes.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Galicki said there was nothing to report. Cavanagh said the Properties and Park Committees would be tasking the Finance Committee to help them find extra money for the park restroom. The Fiscal Officer asked if they had a current amount. There was \$88,000 budgeted, but without knowing whether it would happen this year, the roof expense was taken out of it. She would need to make adjustments once the new dollar amount was determined. Cavanagh figured that between \$37,000 and \$55,000 more would be needed. Galicki asked if the money for the architectural study for the restroom came out of the \$88,000, and the Fiscal Officer concurred. Given that, Cavanagh recommended adding \$6,000 to her figures. The Mayor added that they were still hoping for \$150,000 from the State. Galicki asked whether the Village was again kicking the can down the street by hoping for this grant again and whether it was preferable to find the money to fund the entire cost. If the grant were to come through, that would be wonderful, but if it did not, the Village would have enough money to go forward with the project. The Fiscal Officer explained that the whole amount must be budgeted anyway. Cavanagh said the decision about the grant money would be announced in a month. Galicki asked if there was a total cost for the facility. The Fiscal Officer thought it had increased from \$88,000 to \$128,000 in January. Canton added that it would include \$10,000 for a well for water. Cavanagh reiterated that the Parks Committee did not want any frills. The Fiscal Officer clarified that the well was a separate project and could be budgeted for next year. She asked Cavanagh to get the Finance Committee a firm number before the next meeting on June 13th at 10:00 a.m.

The Mayor reported that Steve Balaban signed an agreement with Bentleyville that was not as extensive as the proposal given to South Russell. He wanted the Finance Committee to revisit the matter. Cavanagh asked if it was per grant and the Mayor thought it was.

SOLICITOR: The Solicitor had nothing to report.

STREET COMMITTEE: Bell stated that the committee will meet June 14, 2024, at 7:30 a.m. in the Street Commissioner's office.

Bell made a motion to approve the grant application to OPWC for funding the Hemlock Rd. culvert replacements, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Bell made a motion to ratify the preapplication form submitted by the Engineer for OPWC funding for the funding for the Hemlock Rd. culvert replacements, seconded by Cavanagh. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

BUILDING COMMITTEE: Bell reported that the committee will be meeting on Thursday, June 13th at 8:00 a.m. in the Building Department office.

The Solicitor asked if the committee will be considering the pavilion rental ordinance. Bell said it would since there was a recommendation from the Safety Committee. Alcohol will be prohibited. Cavanagh noted that Bell wanted the Parks Committee opinion and thought it had been hashed out. Bell advised that it would be effective January 1st. The Mayor thought it was just necessary to take “alcohol” off the pavilion rental agreement because the signs at the park say, “no alcohol.” The Solicitor advised that the ordinance must also be changed because it currently contains language about the presence of alcohol. Cavanagh referenced previous discussion about changing the pavilion rental fee for non-residents, which meant there would be a number of changes to the ordinance. Bell asked if the Solicitor could draft the legislation for the next Council meeting. The Solicitor said she could but explained that the next Council meeting is before the next Building Committee meeting, and suggested they could consider having it on first reading, with the second reading being at the July meeting.

Regarding the rental fees for the pavilion, Bell reported that the committee discussed charging residents \$25 and non-residents \$100. The Mayor said he thought this was too cheap considering the cost of an employee having to come in on a weekend to empty trash. The Village is losing money. Bell was willing to consider overtime costs associated with this but thought there should still be an advantage for being a taxpayer in the Village.

POLICE CHIEF: The Chief reported that he will be absent from the June 10th Council meeting. He explained that later in the meeting, Council would be considering legislation for an agreement with Aris for porta potties for two upcoming events, the Bike Rodeo and Touch a Truck.

He reminded Council that the Cops and Kids Fishing event would be occurring Sunday, June 2nd at 9:00 a.m.

The Mayor stated that the South Russell Police and the Valley Enforcement Group (VEG) Drone Team received accolades for its involvement with the suspect in the shooting of Euclid Police Officer Derbin. The Mayor thought that at the next Safety Committee meeting there should be some sort of recognition of how important South Russell was in the operation.

SAFETY COMMITTEE: Canton said the next committee meeting will be on June 13th at noon at the Police Department. Cops and Kids Fishing will be on Sunday, June 2nd from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. at Lake Louise.

Canton made a motion to accept a donation for the purpose of supporting the UAS Team and equipment in the amount of \$150,000, seconded by Galicki. The Mayor asked if there were strings attached to the donation. The Chief explained that the donation is coming from Sergeant Divita’s family, Patti Morse of the Morse Auto Group. The donation is to purchase some UAS equipment which will belong to the Village of South Russell. They also want it to go towards the purchase of a garage for the drone vehicle. He has engaged the Engineer and the Building Inspector to obtain quotes. The Solicitor verified that the garage will be built on the Village campus, and the Chief concurred.

Canton asked for clarification about Council’s approval of the two crosswalks recommended by the committee. The Fiscal Officer advised that one was approved at the last Council meeting. Canton verified that it would be at the park and asked what the timeline would be for it. The Chief said that the first step would be to obtain bids. The Mayor said that they had just set the money aside. The Fiscal Officer explained that it would be necessary to amend the budget at the next Council meeting

providing there are enough members present to adopt it. \$33,000 was approved by Council and according to the Engineer, the crosswalks did not require much engineering. It is under the threshold, so all that is necessary is to get quotes - there is no need to go out to bid.

Bell reminded Council there was still a motion on the floor for the donation. **Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.**

HR COMMITTEE: Cavanagh asked if everyone had received a copy of the Russell Township Reserve Study and said it would be discussed at the HR meeting on June 13th. The Fiscal Officer reminded her this task was now assigned to the Finance Committee and would be discussed at their next meeting.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Cavanagh said she was looking forward to hearing back about the grant for the park restroom. She and Canton were told in plain fashion that the Parks Committee does not want a ‘two-holer’ but something a little bit better looking.

PARKS COMMITTEE: Cavanagh stated that a meeting would be set up for the committee for late June. She emailed John Boros, the Chair of the Geauga County Parks, who spoke to Paul Pira who said they will not charge the Village for a burn but would accept a small donation. Davey Tree wanted \$11,000 to do it. The Mayor suggested they determine what Pira proposes in comparison to what Davey Tree proposed.

Cavanagh made a motion to hold the South Russell Fall Festival on September 29th from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. with the backup date of October 6th if there is inclement weather on September 29th, seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Canton provided a second reading of a Power a Clean Future resolution authorizing the Village of South Russell to become a Power a Clean Future Ohio community and to adopt a goal to reduce the carbon footprint of the Village, increase energy efficiency, and reduce the energy costs to the Village. The Mayor instructed Council to review the ordinance. He planned to encourage them not to have the third reading at the June 10th meeting because there were some things in the resolution that they all need to be clear on before they vote to do it. Bell asked the Mayor to expand on this. The Mayor saw some issues with some of the energy efficiency requirements, cutting carbon and proving it. It seemed like a lot of work. The Mayor thought they needed more time to figure out how the Village would satisfy the terms of the resolution. Galicki stated that it requires planning, deliverables, and reporting on the deliverables and achievements. Goals must be identified.

The Mayor stated that the Mayors of Chagrin Falls and Moreland Hills would love to show off their solar projects on the water treatment plant and service building roof respectively. They are both happy with Power a Clean Future Ohio. He reiterated that the Village should just know what it is committing to with the resolution.

Canton introduced an ordinance approving the lease agreement between Aris Company and the Village of South Russell in an amount not to exceed at total of \$650 for portable restroom facilities and services for two specific events sponsored by and located at the Village Police Department, authorizing the Chief of Police and Fiscal Officer to execute the lease agreement on behalf of the Village and declaring an emergency.

The Mayor asked why an ordinance was needed for a \$650 expenditure. The Solicitor explained there is a lease agreement involved with terms and conditions. It is not because of the amount.


NEW/OTHER: Bell and Canton had no new business.

Cavanagh stated that she had a few items for the newsletter and asked if anyone else had anything they wanted to see in it because space is limited. She wanted to submit articles about century homes that are no longer here. The Fiscal Officer verified that this was not time sensitive because this newsletter should contain as much time sensitive information as possible such as dates for the Fall Festival and Shredding Day. The things that are not pressing can go in a future online newsletter.

Galicki wanted to make Council aware of problems being experienced by a neighboring Village in Geauga County which may have to be absorbed by the adjacent township. Like South Russell, they broke away from the township 75 years ago, but are facing grave financial difficulties. Cavanagh commented that she would not support dissolving South Russell, and Galicki agreed adding a cautionary note that the Village is in a much better financial position than Aquilla Village, at least for now.

The Mayor added that the four villages and City of Chardon have a representative on an Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) committee. They have asked that this position be given up this year to make for an easier transition. Cavanagh asked if someone else would pick it up, and the Mayor concurred, adding that it is because of the different counts.

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business before Council Bell made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 p.m., seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.


William G. Koons, Mayor


Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki